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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Monday, December 4, 1939.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "NEW TRENDS IN FOOD HABITS." Information from Dr. Hazel K. Stiebeling, Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture. (From 1939 Yearbook.)

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Our Washington reporter has been talking with Dr. Hazel K. Stiebeling, senior food economist of the Bureau of Home Economics. The report of that talk brings us both a commendation and a challenge. Dr. Stiebeling said:

"We Americans are eating better than we used to 50 years ago. That is, better from the nutritional standpoint. But there's still room for improvement in the eating habits of large groups of people who are not yet getting an adequate diet. In spite of the abundance and great variety of foods in this country, many do not get enough food, and many do not get the right foods."

Dr. Stiebeling says that while we need still more nutritional facts through future research, much has been learned. This knowledge ought to reach more people and be put into common practice. It's difficult to change people's food habits, however, whether they're a matter of family custom or personal preference. The importance of an adequate diet is not fully appreciated. The most expensive foods are not always those that do the most for us. We can make many choices in our foods, and sometimes the low-cost food in a given food group contributes the highest food values.

As for the families with very little money to spend for food, Dr. Stiebeling thinks it all the more important that every penny should be spent to best advantage. Farm people are better off than city folks when cash is limited. People on the farm can raise more of their food, particularly vegetables, fruit, eggs, milk, and often poultry and meats.



But the food habits of people in different parts of the world started a long time ago. If early man chanced to live near the seacoast, he ate quantities of shellfish and other seafood. If he lived inland where nuts, wild roots, and seed-bearing grasses were abundant, such foods were used. No doubt in all localities birds and their eggs and other animal foods were eaten. In the Arctic regions, the food consists chiefly of animal products. In the Tropics vegetable food is abundant and important in the diet, because animal foods spoil easily. In temperate zones many kinds of foods are obtained and have probably always been used, much as they are today.

Of course some traditional diets are better than others. For example, Dr. Stiebeling points out that diets in northern India are superior to those in the south and east of India. Diets now in use in the United States combine customs and food habits of many countries. And some of them are evidently an improvement on the old diets. Children of immigrants are often taller than their parents. The increased height has been attributed to better diets in America. American women entering colleges today are found to average more than an inch taller than those of the same age in the same colleges 30 years ago, and the average stature of men in one of our eastern colleges is reported to have increased about 2 inches in the last 60 years.

The change in dietary patterns in the last half-century shows plainly in the proportion of calories or energy-units obtained from the different food groups. (Almost everyone is familiar with the standard energy requirements for different persons,- 3,000 to 4,000 calories a day for men and growing boys, depending on their activity, and 2,200 to 2,500 for women, somewhat less for girls and young children.)

A study of diets of employed workers made by the Bureau of Home Economics in 1935 furnished data for families at three different levels of food expenditure. At each food-spending level these families bought less grain products and meats, and more fats, sugars, fruit, succulent vegetables, and milk than people bought 50 years



ago. They got twice as much of their energy food from the protective foods as families did formerly.

We eat more sugars and fats in the United States than appears at first glance at the table provided in the Yearbook. The figures do not tell anything about the ingredients of bought baked foods, nor of the sugar contained in canned fruits, beverages, or candies and confections.

Dr. Stiebeling quotes Dr. H. C. Sherman, the noted nutritionist, in suggesting that the protective foods, which are milk and its products, fruits, vegetables and eggs, might supply at least half of the needed food calories; and that at least half of our breadstuffs and other cereal and grain products might be in whole grain, dark, or unskimmed forms. At present less than one-third the food calories tend to come from milk and its products, fruits, vegetables and eggs, and less than a fifth, rather than a half, of the breadstuffs are in whole grain or dark forms. Our Washington reporter concludes that if we put this suggestion into practice, there would be a major shift in our American food habits.

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